

Evaluation of the Impact of Household Characteristics on the Performance of the Boy Child in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Mathioya, Murang'a County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Persistent campaign for awareness of girl's retention in school has started bearing fruits, but in retrospect the society has ignored the plight of boy-child. The issue of the Boy-Child has not been adequately addressed (World Bank, 2005). Extensive analysis of data indicates that boy-child is at a higher risk of not performing well in class compared to girls. The trend of more boys dropping out of school and registering a decline in performance in national examinations in Kenya started with a cohort comprising of 620,000 boys and 586,000 girls that joined standard one in 2005. By 2010, survival rate in the group had dropped to 558,000 boys and 562,000 girls. Never before had enrolment of girls in any primary school grade nationally had exceeded that of boys (UNESCO, 2003). This impedes the achievement of Universal Primary Education which is a Millennium Development Goal that by 2015 ensure that all boys and girls alike complete primary schooling. This study sought to examine the problems that hinder the boy child from achieving their dream as revealed in the transition rates from primary to secondary schools in Murang'a County. It identified the challenges to the achievement of Education for All and proposed positive actions for the mitigation of the situation. While the Kenyan government is providing direct grants to secondary schools through Free Secondary Education (FSE) financing scheme, internal efficiency challenges in form of low access and retention continue to be pervasive. The purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent household characteristics influenced the performance of the boy child in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in public secondary schools of Murang'a County. The study objectives included evaluating household characteristics and impact they had on education of the boy child in Murang'a County secondary schools; to determine the economic, marital status of the parent, number of siblings and household religious orientation. The study also sought to establish measures that could be put in place to improve performance in public secondary schools in the county. The study adopted mixed methods to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using frequency counts and percentages. The findings of this study drew conclusions in regard to education policy makers and other stakeholders to formulate strategies that could be used to mitigate the many challenges the boy child is facing and promote better examination performance at secondary level.

Keywords: Performance; Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education; Boy Child; Household; Evaluation; Retention; Completion; Enrolment; Objectives; EFA; Millennium Development Goals.

1.0. Introduction

The boy child of the 21st Century is faced with tremendous challenges which unless guarded, the society is losing him. All children are future leaders of tomorrow and guardians of the future, and the first aim of every family and society should be to raise healthy and productive individuals who are physically, psychologically, socially and mentally well developed. These can be achieved through guidance and the education of the boy-Child who is the father of tomorrow. The negligence of issues affecting the boy-child is apparent and evident in most discourse and academic literature.

Access to education lies at the heart of development. Lack of educational access and securely acquired knowledge and skills is both a part of the definition of poverty and a means for diminution. Quality education is influenced by several factors which include access to education, retention rates, dropout rates and adequacy of instructional resources (World Bank, 2005). The lack of access to secondary education is increasingly seen to constrain countries' abilities to pursue effective growth and development strategies which is leading governments and the funding community to place increased emphasis on the expansion of secondary education (World Bank, 2005).

International reports such as Education for All global monitoring report (UNESCO, 2003), indicates that at the national level, Kenya has virtually attained gender parity in enrolment at both primary and secondary education

levels. However, close scrutiny reveals that serious gender disparities in enrolment exist between regions as regards access, retention, completion, performance and transition. Despite the introduction of Free Primary Education and other interventions, transition rates are still very low (Republic of Kenya, 2007).

Republic of Kenya (2005), report indicates transition rates for both boys and girls from primary to secondary education has been identified by international community as a key measure towards education access for all. Additionally, Sessional Paper no. 1 of 2005 notes that there are low rates in secondary sub-sector as a result of poor transition from primary to secondary. Education Production Function attempts to relate input and output in education sector. Education is viewed as an investment which utilizes resources from individuals and society and is expected to yield output.

In Africa children are often needed to work on the family land and the loss of their labour is a cost to their parents, even if paid employment in the 'modern sector' is not available. This propels parents not to educate their children especially the boy-child so that they work for the family. Boy-child often engages in manual jobs, does not attend schooling or when they do so they do not do very well due to roles they play in the family. Furthermore, studies contend that more emphasis has been placed on girl-child education in many countries (EFA, 2000). This has led to back grounding of boy-child thus detrimental. According to the EFA (2000) continuous lobbying and advocacy, and training to mainstream gender equity in the entire education system will have to be intensified. Development of realistic gender sensitive benchmarks and indicators is a critical variable in achieving EFA goals. Targeting of the girl-child, and in some instances the boy-child, is necessary if not essential for EFA. This has led the boy child to be relegated at the periphery and thus endangered. This study focused on evaluation of the impact of household characteristics on the performance of the boy child in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Murang'a County, Kenya.

1.1. Study Objectives

- (a) To find out how parent's level of education affects the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County.
- (b) To assess how family socio-economic status influences the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County.
- (c) To find out how family size and composition impacts on the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County.
- (d) To establish how parental involvement affects the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County.
- (e) To investigate how the level of education of other family member influences performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Murang'a County.

1.2. Research Questions

- (a) How does the parents' level of education affect the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County?

(b) To what extent does the family socio-economic status affect the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County?

(c) How does the family size and composition affect the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary education examination in Murang'a County?

(d) What role does parental involvement play on the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education examination in Murang'a County?

(e) What effect does the level of education of other family members have on the performance of the boy child in the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Murang'a County?

2.0. Statement of the Problem

In Africa children are often needed to work on the family land and the loss of their labour is a cost to their parents, since paid employment in the 'modern sector' is not available. This propels parents not to educate their children especially the boy-child so that he work for the family. Boy-child often engages in manual jobs, does not attend schooling or when they do so they do not do very well due to back grounding of boy-child thus detrimental performance in the examinations. According to the EFA (2000) continuous lobbying and advocacy, and training to mainstream gender equity in the entire education system will have to be intensified. Development of realistic gender sensitive benchmarks and indicators is a critical variable in achieving EFA goals. Targeting of the girl-child, and in some instances the boy-child, is necessary if not essential for EFA. This has led the boy child to be relegated at the periphery and thus endangered. This sustained the researchers' curiosity in this study to evaluate the impact of household characteristics on the performance of the boy child in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Murang'a County, Kenya.

3.0. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the impact of household characteristics on the performance of the boy child in Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education in Murang'a County, Kenya.

4.0. Significance of the study

The trend of more boys dropping out of school impedes the achievement of Universal Education which is Millennium Development Goal, number two that by 2015 ensure that all boys and girls alike complete schooling. This examined the problems that hindered the boy child from achieving their dream as revealed in the completion of secondary schools in Murang'a County identified the challenges to the achievement of education for all and proposes positive actions for the mitigation of the situation. The study may equally be of great benefit to future researchers undertaking studies in the field of the performance of the boy child. This is because the document brought forth at the end of the study will ultimately contribute to the body of scholarly works in the field. The recommendations made by the study may also contribute to the shaping of policy as regards the pertinent issues affecting the performance of the boy child for the good of the education sector in the county and the country as a whole.

5.0. Review of Related Literature

5.1. Household characteristics

Income, assets and family structure are the main household characteristics identified in the literature that impact on KCSE performance. Household wealth clearly determines a household's ability to invest in the education of the child. The likelihood of children good performance in exams depends on the level of opportunity costs incurred by parents by them being in school (Appleton, 1991, cited in Bredie and Beeharry, 1998). Children with greater opportunities to earn income are likely to be taken out of school and involved in work if parents need additional income (Hanushek and Lavy, 1994). Household structure is important because household resources are needed to pay for the education of children. In the Ethiopian context, for example, Woldehanna *et al.* (2005) observed a negative relationship between birth order and schooling, suggesting that younger children may be paying for the education of the older ones. In addition, it has been observed that female-headed households, and households where mothers have more decision-making power, tend to make decisions in favour of child schooling. When female decision-making power is combined with higher maternal education levels, children are more likely to perform better (Holmes, 2003; Kabeer, 2003). The distribution of decision-making power within the household is, therefore, important in determining children's performance.

5.2. Parents level of education and the performance of the boy child

The findings on parental education are mixed. First, children whose parents are educated are more likely to pass well because they live in an environment which is usually more intellectually stimulating. Secondly, parents who are more educated, may value education more than less educated parents which, in turn, influences the chances of a child performing well and progressing in school. However, in addition to parental education, other factors such as resource availability and high returns to schooling are also important in explaining children's school performance. For example, Hanushek and Lavy (1994) found that the impact of parental education on the probability of better performance in developing countries was significant (Hanushek and Lavy, 1994).

5.3. Other family members level of education and the performance of the boy child

The education of other household members, besides the parents, also matters in determining final decisions about children's education. Charles *et al.* (2003) concluded that parental involvement in children's education has a powerful impact on their attainment and adjustment in education. Similarly, Escobal *et al.* (2005), in the case of Peru, found that the education levels of female adults in the family (not just the caregivers) were positively associated with children's educational outcomes. In addition, parental aspirations are important, because parents may want their children to achieve high levels of education, independent of any economic return. Parents may believe that education has a value in itself, as is the case for health (Alderman and King, 1998).

5.4. Family socio- economic status and the performance of the boy child

Children's home background is also an important influence in school achievement (Olatunji, 1990). The study of determinants of attainment must account for experiences in the home such as the household's socio-economic

status, demographic structure, parental education levels and parents' involvement in their children's education experience (Kutnick, 2000).

Behrman and Knowles (1999) in their research on Vietnam found a significant association between household income, the age the child started school and exam scores in the last completed grade. The impact of income was particularly significant in the case of boys (Brown and Park, 2002; Holmes, 2003).

5.5. Family size and composition and the performance of the boy child

In the case of family composition, being a member of a large family and belonging to a female-headed household were found to have a negative influence on child achievement. Based on a review of empirical studies, King (1987), quoted in Tilak (1989), found a persistently negative correlation between family size and children's school achievement. Children from smaller families tend to show better performance in school outcomes than those from larger families.

Performance of children from female-headed households in the US to be significantly lower than that of children from other households on various schooling outcomes, Shareen (2004) found that in rural Bangladesh the impact of female-headed households on children's education depended on their socio-economic status and pre-marital circumstances. In a second stage regression, the study found that although children from households headed by widows were 93 per cent more likely to work (compared to children from male-headed households), there was no statistically significant effect of mother's widowhood on any measure of schooling outcomes. Children from households headed by married women, on the other hand, have significantly stronger schooling attainment than children from male-headed households: they are 19 per cent more likely to have ever attended school, 8 per cent more likely to be currently enrolled in school, and 41 per cent more likely to have finished at least two or more years of school. Evidence of the importance of parental education in shaping children's school performance is mixed.

5.6. Parental involvement and the performance of the boy child

In Egypt, Hanushek and Lavy (1994) found that student performance was marginally, but positively, influenced by the father's educational level but that mother's education did not play a significant role. However, in Ethiopia, Sewnet (1995) found that family educational background was not important in explaining differences in achievement, particularly in mathematical computing skills. Parental involvement, however, was found to be important. Barnard (2004) studied the effects of parental involvement both in school and at home on the success indicators of children in school-based longitudinal data from Chicago. Controlling for other factors, Barnard found that greater reported involvement of parents in elementary school was significantly associated with increased on-time high school completion, and the highest grade completed by a student.

Similarly, Sentayehu (1998) studied the performance of 560 students from Ethiopian junior secondary schools, based on their average records over four years, to investigate the impact of parenting style. He compared four models of parenting style, namely authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent and neglectful. Although the performance of students from homes with other styles of parenting was not significantly different, students with parents with an

authoritarian style showed significantly higher academic achievements than the others. Admasu (2004) also found that the performance of high school students in Addis Ababa was significantly associated with parents' involvement. The study showed a significant positive association between fathers' involvement and students' academic performance, regardless of the gender of students.

6.0. Research Methodology and Design

The research was guided by post-positivist theoretical perspective. Post-positivists believe that human knowledge is not based on unchallenged, solidified foundations; but it is hypothetical. Nevertheless, they believe there are real grounds for asserting these beliefs, although these warrants can be modified or withdrawn in the light of further investigation (Crotty 1998).

Post-positivism assumes critical-realist ontology and an empiricist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Like its earlier Positivist cousin, it posits a reality that is "out there" to be discovered, however, in contrast, the reality can only be known imperfectly and within probability, not certainty as in the naïve-realist position of Positivism. Post-positivism postulates, like Positivism, that the universe is comprised of objective, constant objects and structures that exist as observable entities, on their own, independent of the observer's appreciation of them (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Factors such as attitude towards education, knowledge about the importance of completion of school, among other things has been associated with retention and completion of school or lack of it.

6.1. Summary of Findings of the study

Most of the teachers had the perception that the households that the students came from affected their academic performance. This was by virtue of the fact that the students derived their motivation and aptitude from their parents. The parent's education levels also came out as a critical factor in impacting on the students' performance. This is because the education levels determined their capacity in terms of ability to influence their children to work hard. In addition, parental aspirations are important, because parents may want their children to achieve high levels of education, independent of any economic return. Parents may believe that education has a value in itself, as is the case for health (Alderman and King, 1998). Behrman and Knowles (1999) in their research on Vietnam found a significant association between household income, the age the child started school and exam scores in the last completed grade. The impact of income was particularly significant. Barnard found that greater reported involvement of parents in elementary school was significantly associated with increased on-time high school completion, and the highest grade completed by a student. Children from smaller families tend to show better performance in school outcomes than those from larger families.

7.0. Conclusions of the Study

The study drew the following conclusions: The household characteristics equally came out as an integral and critical factor in the students' academic performance. This was driven by the fact that the students capacity to draw inspiration from the parents and other household members inspired and influenced their capacities to perform. This was a fact that had no definite difference from boys and girls as they both derived and drew inspiration from their households that they came from.

8.0. Recommendations of the Study

(1) The parents should be implored on how to guide and mentor their children on the essence of taking academic work seriously. This may greatly aid and facilitate the student's capacity in terms of having them grow and perform well in the academic pursuits. This is because many students draw their core inspiration and motivation from parents.

(2) The parents should thus continuously engage the students and provide them with a platform to grow their skills and capacities especially so with a focus on the boy child. This is driven by the fact that current statistics show that there have been many initiatives towards extolling the position of girl child.

(3) The school administrations should always seek to liaise with the parents with a view of understanding the child's characteristics. Major emphasis should be placed on the boy child. This is because he is placed at a point of psychological disadvantage owing to the fact that a lot of attention has been conferred on the girl child with an aim of bridging the inherent patriarchal inequalities. The boy child's characteristics should be understood with a view of facilitating counseling and aiding him develop and grow his stature as a student and set to excel in his academic pursuits for posterity.

(4) The local communities should be enlightened and sensitized on the need to appreciate and value the academic pursuits and explicit of their children. This is by way of having them participate in all the activities that pertains the academic pursuits of their children and the community membership in the name of all the students. The community members should be implored on to put their focus and attention in the activities of the boy child empowerment. This is with an aim and focus of improving the lots of the boy child and facilitating greater and better pursuits in terms of their academic achievements. This may positively impact on the performance of the boy child as opposed to the present situation whereby the boy child looks more or less neglected in terms of conferment of attention.

(5) The schools should make a heavy involvement on the infrastructure and facilitation provided to the boy child. This is by way of having the schools upgrade and uplift themselves to effectively serve and meet the aspirations and expectations of the community as pertains the academic demands of the boy child. The boys' schools should thus be implored on to invest in facilities in the name of teaching and instruction materials and equally to ameliorate the position of boys in comparison to the girls. The putting up of classes provision for textbooks and allied accessories should be greatly emphasized upon by the schools administrations in conjunction with all stakeholders and the communities at large. This may work towards bridging the inequalities between the many boys and girls schools in the district in terms of facilities provision.

(6) The government policy makers should seek to develop and craft policies which are pleasant and appealing to the boys in terms of facilitating their academic performance. This is because at present, greater emphasis in terms of initiatives to have girls excel and perform well in their academic activities has been put in place but more has been done to motivate boys. This should be done in a way to encourage them to partake in their academic pursuits in a greater manner. This can be by way of giving incentives to high performing boys, facilitating resources provision in terms of books and tax rebates to investors who put up private boys schools. This may ultimately shape the

perception and attitude towards their academic performance and put them into a better pedestal as regards their academic performance.

9.0. Suggestions for Further Studies

- (1) The researcher suggests that a study on factors affecting the academic performance of boys from public primary schools should be carried out.
- (2) The researcher suggests that a study on factors contributing to the poor performance at subject level by boys in the KCSE examination should be carried out.
- (3) The researcher suggests that a study on the role of quality assurance programmes on the performance of the KCSE examination should be carried out.
- (4) The researcher suggests that a study on the role of strategic management of the performance of the KCSE examination should be carried out.
- (5) The researcher suggests that a study on the role head teachers instructional supervisory function on the KCSE performance should be carried out

Declarations

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial, professional, or personal interests.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Authors' contributions

Both the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

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